

World War II

Adolf Hitler

**"The Last Days in Hitler's Air Raid Shelter"
Hanna Reitsch Interrogation**

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World War II:

Adolf Hitler:

"The Last Days in Hitler's Air Raid Shelter" Hanna Reitsch Interrogation

A US Army Interrogation unit report on the interrogation of Hanna Reitsch. Reitsch was a famous female German test pilot. She was the only woman to win the German Iron Cross. She is believed to be the last person to leave Hitler's air raid shelter alive. The report gives her firsthand account of the last days in Hitler's bunker.

From the report's introduction:

"This report is the story of the last days of the war as they were experienced by Hanna Reitsch the well known German test pilot and aeronautical research expert. Her story does not pretend to add any sensational details to what is already known of those days. It is rather an eye-witness account of what actually happened in the highest places during the last moments of the War. Her account of the flight into Berlin to report to Hitler and of her stay in the Fuehrer's bunker is probably as accurate a one as will be obtained of those last days, although the "is he dead or is he not dead" fate of Hitler is only answered to the extent of describing the mental state and the hopelessness of the last-minute situation, from which individual opinions must be drawn. Her own opinion is that the tactical situation and Hitler's own physical condition made any thoughts of his escape inconceivable."

Also in this set are the reports "Last Letters from Hitler's Air Raid Shelter" and "Condemnation of Goering by Hanna Reitsch."

The "Last Letters from Hitler's Air Raid Shelter" report deals with the fact that Reitsch was given letters to deliver by various occupants of Hitler's bunker during the last days. Included among them were letters written by Eva Braun and Himmler. Reitsch had close contact with the leadership of the Luftwaffe. In the third report she paints an unflattering portrait of Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring to her U.S. Army interrogators.



Photo Title: Der Führer verleiht Flugkapitän Hanna Reitsch das Eiserne Kreuz

Translation: Hitler presents the Iron Cross to flight captain Hanna Reitsch

Hoffmann, Heinrich, 1885-1957 , photographer

Date Created/Published: [1941 March 28]

Summary: Adolf Hitler shaking hands with Hanna Reitsch, aviator and only woman to win the Iron Cross; Hitler's adjutant Nicolaus von Below, Hermann Göring and Luftwaffe General Karl Bodenschatz stand in background.

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AIR DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES FORCES IN AUSTRIA
Air Interrogation Unit (USDIC)
APO 777 US ARMY

HEW/EAB/hdh

8.14

8 October 1945

INTERROGATION SUMMARY)

NUMBER

1)

THE LAST DAYS IN HITLER'S AIR RAID SHELTER

1. SOURCE: Name: Fraulein Hanna Reitsch.

Rank: Flugkapiten (Captain of the Air--Honorary title given for outstanding aeronautical achievement.

Date of Birth: 29 March 1912

Marital Status: Single

Occupation: Test-pilot and aeronautical research expert

Citizenship: German

Address: Leopolda Krone Castle, Salzburg, Austria.

Political Status: Non-party member

Decorations: Iron Cross first class.

2. INTRODUCTION: This report is the story of the last days of the War as they were experienced by Hanna Reitsch, the well known German test-pilot and aeronautical research expert. Her story does not pretend to add any sensational details to what is already known of those days; it is rather an eye-witness account of what actually happened in the highest places during the last moments of the War. Her account of the flight into Berlin to report to Hitler and of her stay in the Fuehrer's bunker is probably as accurate as one as will be obtained of those last days, although the "is he dead or is he not dead" fate of Hitler is only answered to the extent of describing the mental state and the hopelessness of the last-minute situation, from which individual opinions must be drawn. Her own opinion is that the tactical situation and Hitler's own physical condition made any thoughts of his escape inconceivable.

3. Her story is remarkable only in that she played a small part in the events of the War's end and that she had personal contact with the top-bracket Nazis as that end descended upon them. It is also of interest as it is likely that Reitsch is one of the last, if not the very last person who got out of the shelter alive. Her information is evaluated as reliable and it is possible that her story may throw some light or perhaps serve as an aid to a fuller knowledge of what happened during the last days of Berlin and of the War.

4. At times she is not certain as to names and specific times. Names escape her. In many cases the contacts herein related were quite limited inasmuch as they have to do only with the last few days. Her

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times may be inaccurate as the events of those days followed each other with such tumult that she is often unable to remember the proper sequence of events.

5. It will be noted that much of the report concerns itself with the Nazi and German interpretation of "honor". Reitsch herself, in answering queries, carefully weighs the "honor" aspects of every remark and then gives her answers carefully but truthfully. The use of the word amounts practically to a fetish complex with the source and is almost an incongruous embodiment of her entire philosophy. Her constant repetition of the word is in no manner as obvious to her as it is to the interrogator, nor is the meaning the same, nor does she recognize the incongruous use she makes of the word. Therefore each time "honor" appears it is apologetically submitted in quotations.

6. She tells her story in conversational form, and although it is, in part, reproduced in that manner here, no pretense is made that the quotations are in all cases exact; they are simply given as she remembers them. If it is kept in mind then that this material is a statement of her own opinions and observations, the information may be considered as completely reliable.

7. THE TRIP TO BERLIN: Hitler had sent a telegram to Munich on the 24th of April to Lieutenant General Ritter von Grein, instructing him to report to the Reichschancellery on a highly urgent matter. The problem of getting into Berlin was then already a very precarious one, as the Russians had practically encircled the city. Grein however, decided that by availing himself of Hanna Reitsch as pilot, the entrance might be accomplished by means of an autogiro, which could land on the streets or in the gardens of the Reichschancellery.

8. During the night of the 25th to the 26th of April Reitsch and Grein arrived at Rechlin, prepared immediately to fly into Berlin. As however, the only available autogiro had been damaged that day, it was decided that a Feldwebel pilot, who had taken Albert Speer to the Fuehrer two days before, should fly Grein in because of the experience the previous flight had given him. Some sense of responsibility to Grein, as his personal pilot and friend, made Reitsch beg to be taken along. A Focke-Wulf 190 was to be used, which had a pig-a-back space for one passenger arranged behind the pilot's seat. Reitsch was stuffed into the tail through a small emergency opening.

9. Forty fighters were taken to fly cover. Almost immediately upon take-off they were engaged by Russian aircraft. A running, hedge-hopping flight got them to the Gatow airfield, the only Berlin field still in German hands. Their own craft got through with nothing more than a few wing shots but the cost was heavy to the supporting fighters.

10. The landing at Gatow was made through further heavy attacks by Russian fighters who were strafing the field when they arrived. What was left of the German planes engaged the Russians while the Grein craft made a successful landing. Immediately attempts were made to phone the Chancellery but as all the lines were out, it was decided to fly an available Fiesler-Storch for the remaining distance and land within walking distance of Hitler's shelter. With Grein at the controls and Reitsch as passenger, the plane took off under a whirling cover of German-Russian dog-fights. At a height of a few meters Grein managed to get away from the field and continue at tree-top level toward the Brandenburger Tor.

11. Street fighting was going on below them and countless Russian aircraft were in the air. After a few minutes of flight, heavy fire tore out the bottom of the plane and severely injured Grein's right leg. By reaching over his shoulders, Reitsch took

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control of the craft and by dodging and squirming closely along the ground, brought the plane down on the East-West axis. Heavy Russian artillery and small arm fire was shelling the area with shrapnel as they landed. A passing vehicle was commandeered to take them to Hitler's shelter, with Grein receiving first aid for his shattered foot on the way.

12. ARRIVAL AT HITLER'S SHELTER: Grein and Reitsch arrived in the bunker between 6 and 7 o'clock on the evening of the 26th of April. First to meet them was Frau Goebbels, who fell upon Reitsch with tears and kisses, expressing her astonishment that anyone still possessed the courage and loyalty to come to the Fuehrer, in stark contrast to all those who had deserted him. Grein was immediately taken to the operation room where Hitler's physician tended the injured foot.

13. Hitler came into the sick room, according to Reitsch, with his face showing deep gratitude over Grein's coming. He remarked something to the effect that even a soldier has the right to disobey an order when everything indicates that to carry it out would be futile and hopeless. Grein then reported his presence in the official manner.

14. HITLER'S DENUNCIATION OF GOERING:

Hitler: "Do you know why I have called you?"

Grein: "No, mein Fuehrer."

Hitler: "Because Hermann Goering has betrayed and deserted both me and his Fatherland. Behind my back he has established connections with the enemy. His action was a mark of cowardice. And against my orders he has gone to save himself at Berchtesgaden. From there he sent me a disrespectful telegram. He said that I had once named him as my successor and that now, as I was no longer able to rule from Berlin he was prepared to rule from Berchtesgaden in my place. He closes the wire by stating that if he had no answer from me by nine-thirty on the date of the wire he would assume my answer to be in the affirmative."

15. The scene Reitsch describes as "touchingly dramatic", that there were tears in the Fuehrer's eyes as he told them of Goering's treachery, that his head sagged, that his face was deathly pallid, and that the uncontrolled shaking of his hands made the message flutter wildly as he handed it to Grein.

16. The Fuehrer's face remained deathly earnest as Grein read. Then every muscle in it began to twitch and his breath came in explosive puffs; only with effort did he gain sufficient control to actually shout:

17. "An ultimatum!! A crass ultimatum!! Now nothing remains. Nothing is spared me. No allegiances are kept, no 'honor' lived up to, no disappointments that I have not had, no betrayals that I have not experienced, and now this above all else. Nothing remains. Every wrong has already been done me."

18. As Reitsch explains it, the scene was in the typical "et tu Brute" manner, full of remorse and self-pity. It was long before he could gather sufficient control to continue.

19. With eyes hard and half-closed and in a voice unusually low he went on: "I immediately had Goering arrested as a traitor to the Reich, took from him all his offices, and removed him from all organizations. That is why I have called you to me. I hereby declare you Goering's successor as Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe. In the name of the German people I give you my hand."

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20. "TO DIE FOR THE HONOR OF THE LUFTWAFFE": Grein and Reitsch were deeply stunned with the news of Goering's betrayal. As with one mind they both grasped Hitler's hands and begged to be allowed to remain in the bunker, and with their own lives atone for the great wrong that Goering had perpetrated against the Fuehrer, against the German people, and against the Luftwaffe itself. To save the "honor" of the flyers who had died, to reestablish the "honor" of the Luftwaffe that Goering had destroyed, and to guarantee the "honor" of their land in the eyes of the world, they begged to remain. Hitler agreed to all of this and told them they might stay, and told them too that their decision would long be remembered in the history of the Luftwaffe. It had been previously arranged with operations at Rechlin that an aircraft was to come in the next day to take Grein and Reitsch out of Berlin. Now that they had decided to stay it was impossible to get the information out. Kochlin, in the meantime, was sending plane after plane, each shot down in turn by the Russians. Finally on the 27th a JU 52, loaded with SS guards and ammunition, managed to land on the East-West traffic axis, but because Reitsch and Grein had intended to stay, was sent back empty. (The order cashing in Goering was released from the underground headquarters sometime on the 23rd of April.)

21. HITLER SAYS THE CALL IS LOST: Later that first evening Hitler called Reitsch to him in his room. She remembers that his face was deeply lined and that there was a constant film of moisture in his eyes. In a very small voice he said, "Hanna, you belong to those who will die with me. Each of us has a vial of poison such as this", with which he handed her one for herself and one for Grein. "I do not wish that one of us falls to the Russians alive, nor do I wish our bodies to be found by them. Each person is responsible for destroying his body so that nothing recognizable remains. Eva and I will have our bodies burned. You will devise your own method. Will you please so inform von Grein?"

22. Reitsch sank to a chair in tears, not, she claims, over the certainty of her own end but because for the first time she knew that the Fuehrer saw the cause as lost. Through the words she said, "Mein Fuehrer, why do you stay? Why do you deprive Germany of your life? When the news was released that you would remain in Berlin to the last, the people were amazed with horror. 'The Fuehrer must live so that Germany can live', the people said. Save yourself, Mein Fuehrer, that is the will of every German."

23. "No Hanna, if I die it is for the 'honor' of our country, it is because as a soldier I must obey my own command that I would defend Berlin to the last. My dear girl, I did not intend it so. I believed firmly that Berlin would be saved at the banks of the Oder. Everything we had was moved to hold that position. You may believe that when our best efforts failed, I was the most horror-struck of all. Then when the encirclement of the city began the knowledge that there were three million of my country-men still in Berlin made it necessary that I stay to defend them. By staying I believed that all the troops of the land would take example through my act and come to the rescue of the city. I hoped that they would rise to super-human efforts to save me and thereby save my three million country-men. But, my Hanna, I still have hope. The army of General Wenck is moving up from the South. He must and will drive the Russians back long enough to save our people. Then we will fall back to hold again."

24. It appeared almost as if he believed this himself and as the conversation closed he was walking about the room with quick, stumbling strides, his hand clasped behind him and his head bobbing up and down as he walked. Although his words spoke of hope, Hanna claims that his face showed that the War was over.

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25. Hanna returned to Grein's bedside, handed him the poison, and then decided with him, should the end really come, that they would quickly drink the contents of the vial and then each pull the pin from a heavy grenade and hold it tightly to their bodies.

26. Late in the night of 26th to 27th of April the first heavy barrage bracketed the Chancellory. The splattering of heavy shells and the crashing of falling buildings directly above the air-raid shelter tightened the nervous strain of everyone so that here and there deep sobbing came through the doors. Hanna spent the night tending Grein, who was in great pain, and in getting grenades ready in the event that the Russians should enter the Chancellory grounds before morning.

27. HITLER'S GUESTS IN THE SHELTER. The next morning she was introduced to the other occupants and learned for the first time the identity of all those who were facing the end with the Fuehrer. Present in the elaborate shelter on the 27th of April were Goebbels and his wife with their six children; State secretary Neuman; Hitler's right hand, Reichsleiter Martin Bormann; Havel from Ribbentrop's office; Admiral Vosz as representative from Doenitz; General Krebs of the infantry and his adjutant Bourgdorf; Hitler's personal pilot, Hansel Bauer; another pilot Baetz; Eva Braun; SS Obergruppenfuehrer Fegelein as liaison between Himmler and Hitler and husband of Eva Braun's sister; Hitler's personal Physician, Dr. Stumpfegger; Oberst von Below, Hitler's Luftwaffe Adjutant; Dr. Lorenz representing Reichspresse chief Dr. Dietrich for the German press; two of Hitler's secretaries, a Frau Christian, wife of General der Flieger Christian and a Fraulein Kreuger; and various SS orderlies and messengers. Reitsch claims that these composed the entire assembly.

28. A regular visitor during the last days was Reichsjugendfuehrer Axman who was commanding a Hitlerjugend division committed to the defense of the city. From Axman came current information as to the ground situation against the Russians which was well mirrored by the increasingly despondent manner of each visit.

29. ANOTHER BETRAYAL: Late in the afternoon of the 27th Obergruppenfuehrer Fegelein disappeared. Shortly thereafter it was reported that he had been captured on the outskirts of Berlin disguised in civilian clothes, claiming to be a refugee. The news of his capture was immediately brought to Hitler who instantly ordered him shot. The rest of the evening Fegelein's betrayal weighed heavily on the Fuehrer and in conversation he indicated a half-way doubt as to Himmler's position, fearing that Fegelein's desertion might have been known and even condoned by the SS leader.

30. OBSERVATIONS ON SHELTER CONDUCT: Reitsch had little contact with most of the people in the shelter, being mostly occupied in nursing von Grein, but she did have the opportunity to speak to many of them and observe their reactions under the trying conditions of the last days in the bunker. It is believed that she attempts to relate her observations truthfully and that her reactions are honestly conceived. It must be remembered that prior to her arrival in the bunker Reitsch had but small contact with most of these individuals and that her previous opinions regarding them were at a rather low level. Of the people she was able to observe closely the Goebbels family probably stands out.

31. DOCTOR GOEBBELS: She describes Goebbels as being insanely incensed over Goering's treachery. He strode about his small, luxurious quarters like an animal, muttering vile accusations concerning

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the Luftwaffe leader and what he had done. The precarious military situation of the moment was Goering's fault. Their present plight was Goering's fault. Should the war be lost, as it certainly now seemed it would be, that too would be Goering's fault.

32. "That swine", Goebbels said, "who has always set himself up as the Fuehrer's greatest support now does not have the courage to stand beside him. As if that were not enough, he wants to replace the Fuehrer as head of the State. He, an incessant incompetent, who has destroyed his Fatherland with his mishandling and stupidity, now wants to lead the entire nation. By this alone he proves that he was never truly one of us, that at heart he was always weak and a traitor."

33. All this, as Hanna saw it, was in the best theatrical manner, with much hand waving and fine gestures, made even more grotesque by the jerky up-and-down hobbling as he strode about the room. When he wasn't railing about Goering he spoke to the world about the example those in the bunker were setting for history. As on a platform and gripping a chair-back like a rostrum he said:

34. "We are teaching the world how men die for their 'honor'. Our deaths shall be an eternal example to all Germans, to all friends and enemies alike. One day the whole world will acknowledge that we did right, that we sought to protect the world against bolshevism with our lives. One day it will be set down in the history of all time."

35. It appears that Goebbels exercised his greatest ability to the very last. The rooms of Goebbels and Reitsch adjoined each other and doors were usually open. Through them the Goebbels oratory would sound out at any hour of the day or night. And always the talk was of "honor", of "how to die", of "standing true to the Fuehrer to the last", of "setting an example that would long blaze as a holy thing from the pages of history."

36. One of the last things Reitsch remembers hearing from the lips of the propaganda master was: "We shall go down for the glory of the Reich so that the name of Germany will live forever." Even Reitsch was moved to conclude that the Goebbels display, in spite of the tenseness of the situation, was a bit overdrawn and out and out theatrical. She claims that in her opinion Goebbels, then as he always had, performed as if he were speaking to a legion of historians who were avidly awaiting and recording every word. She adds that her own dubious opinions regarding Goebbels' mannerisms, his superficiality, and studied oratory, were well substantiated by these outbursts. She claims too, that after listening to these tirades she and von Grein often asked each other, with a sad, head-shaking attitude, "Are these the people who ruled our country?"

37. FRAU GOEBBELS: Frau Goebbels she describes as a very brave woman, whose control, which was at most times strong, did break down now and then to piteous spasms of weeping. Her main concern was her children and in their presence her manner was always delightful and cheery. Much of her day was occupied in keeping the children's clothes clean and tidy, and as they had only the clothes they wore this kept Frau Goebbels occupied. Often she would quickly retire to her room to hide the tears. It appears from Hanna's description that Frau Goebbels probably represented the epitome of Nazi indoctrination.

38. If the Third Reich could not live she preferred to die with it, nor would she allow her children to outlive it. In recognition of the example she embodied of true German womanhood, Hitler, in the presence of all the occupants of the bunker, presented her with his personal/golden party insignia. "A staunch pillar of the 'honor' upon

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which National Socialism was built and the German Fatherland founded", was his approximate remark as he pinned it to her dress.

39. Frau Goebbels often thanked God that she was alive so that she could kill her children to save them from whatever "evil" would follow the collapse. To Reitsch she said, "My dear Hanna, when the end comes you must help me if I become weak about the children. You must help me to help them out of this life. They belong to the Third Reich and to the Fuehrer and if those two things cease to exist there can be no further place for them. But you must help me. My greatest fear is that at the last moment I will be too weak."

40. It is Hanna's belief that in the last moment she was not weak.

41. Conclusions that can be safely drawn from Hanna's remarks is that Frau Goebbels was simply one of the most convinced subjects of her own husband's rantings, the most pronounced example of the Nazi influence over the women of Germany.

42. THE GOEBBELS CHILDREN: The Goebbels children numbered six. Their names and approximate ages were: Hela, 12; Hilda, 11; Helmut, 9; Holde, 7; Hodda, 5; Hoide, 3. They were the one bright spot of relief in the stark, death shadowed life of the bunker. Reitsch taught them songs which they sang for the Fuehrer and for the injured von Grein. Their talk was full of being in "the cave" with their "Uncle Fuehrer", and in spite of the fact that there were bombs outside, nothing could really harm them as long as they were with him. And anyway "Uncle Fuehrer" had said that soon the soldiers would come and drive the Russians away and then tomorrow they could all go back to play in their garden. Everyone in the bunker entered into the game of making the time as pleasant as possible for them. Frau Goebbels repeatedly thanked Reitsch for making their last days enjoyable, as Reitsch often gathered them about her and told them long stories of her flying and of the places she had been and the countries she had seen.

43. EVA BRAUN: It seemed to Reitsch that Hitler's "girl friend" remained studiously true to her position as the "show-piece" in the Fuehrer's circle. Most of her time was occupied in finger nail polishing, changing of clothes for each hour of the day, and all the other little feminine tasks of grooming, combing, and polishing. She seemed to take the prospects of dying with the Fuehrer as quite matter of fact, with an attitude that seemed to say: "—had not the relationship been of 12 long years duration and had she not seriously threatened suicide when Hitler once wanted to be rid of her. This would be a much easier way to die and much more proper—". Her constant remark was, "Poor, poor Adolf, deserted by everyone, betrayed by all. Better that ten thousand others die than that he be lost to Germany."

44. In Hitler's presence she was always charming, and thoughtful of his every comfort. But only while she was with him was she completely in character, for the moment he was out of ear-shot she would rave about all the ungrateful swine who had deserted their Fuehrer and that each of them should be destroyed. All her remarks had an adolescent tinge and it appeared that the only "good" Germans at the moment were those who were caught in the bunker and that all the others were traitors because they were not there to die with him. The reasons for her willingness to die with the rest were similar to those of Frau Goebbels. She was simply convinced that whatever followed the Third Reich would not be fit to live in for a true German. Often she expressed sorrow for those people who were unable to destroy themselves as they would forever be forced to live without "honor" and reduced instead to living as human beings without souls.

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45. Reitsch emphasizes that Braun was very apparently of rather shallow mentality, but she also agrees that she was a very beautiful woman. Beyond fulfilling her purpose, Reitsch considers it highly unlikely that Braun had any control or influence over Hitler. The rumor of the last-minute marriage ceremony Reitsch considers as highly unlikely, not only because she believes that Hitler had no such intention but also because the circumstances in the bunker on the last days would have made such a ceremony ludicrous. Certainly, up to the time Reitsch left the bunker, hardly a day before Hitler's death was announced, there had not been the slightest mention of such a ceremony. The rumor that there had been children out of the union, Reitsch quickly dismisses as fantastic.

46. MARTIN BORMANN: Bormann moved about very little, kept instead very close to his writing desk. He was "recording the momentous events in the bunker for posterity." Every word, every action went down on his paper. Often he would visit this person or that to scowlingly demand what the exact remark had been that passed between the Fuehrer and the person he had just had an audience with. Things that passed between other occupants of the bunker were also carefully recorded. This document was to be spirited out of the bunker at the very last moment so that, according to the modest Bormann, it could, "take its place among the greatest chapters of German history."

47. ADOLF HITLER: Throughout Hanna's stay in the bunker Hitler's manner and physical condition sank to lower and lower depths. At first he seemed to be playing the proper part of leading the defense of Germany and Berlin. And at first this was in some manner possible as communications were still quite reliable. Messages were telephoned to a flak tower and from there were radioed out by means of a portable, balloon-suspended aerial. But each day this was more and more difficult until late on the afternoon of the 28th and all day on the 29th communications were almost impossible. On about the 20th of April, at what was probably the last Hitler war-council in the Reichschancellery, the Fuehrer is said to have been so overcome by the persistently hopeless news that he completely broke down in the presence of all the gathering. The talk in the bunker, where Hanna heard of the collapse, was that with this display even the most optimistic of Hitler's cohorts tended toward the conviction that the War was irretrievably lost. According to Reitsch, Hitler never physically nor mentally recovered from this conference room collapse.

48. Occasionally he still seemed to hold to the hope of General Wenck's success in breaking through from the South. He talked of little else, and all day on the 28th and 29th he was mentally planning the tactics that Wenck might use in freeing Berlin. He would stride about the shelter, waving a road map that was fast disintegrating from the sweat of his hands and planning Wenck's campaign with anyone who happened to be listening. When he became overly excited he would snatch the map from where it lay, pace with a quick, nervous stride about the room, and loudly "direct" the city's defense with armies that no longer existed (as even Wenck, unknown to the Fuehrer, had already been routed and destroyed).

49. Reitsch describes it as a pathetic thing, the picture of a man's complete disintegration. A comic-tragedy of frustration, futility, and uselessness. The picture of a man running almost blindly from wall to wall in his last retreat waving papers that fluttered like leaves in his nervous, twitching hands, or sitting stooped and crumpled before his table moving buttons to represent his non-existent armies, back and forth on a sweat stained nap, like a young boy playing at war.

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50. THE POSSIBILITY THAT HITLER STILL LIVES: The possibility that Hitler might have gotten out of the bunker alive, Reitsch dismisses as completely absurd. She claims that she is convinced that the Hitler she left in the shelter was physically unable to have gotten away. "Had a path been cleared for him from the bunker to freedom he would not have had the strength to use it", she says. She believes too, that at the very end he had no intention to live, that only the Wenck hope stayed his hand from putting the mass suicide plan into operation. News that Wenck could not get through, she feels, would immediately have set off the well rehearsed plans of destruction.

51. When confronted with the rumor that Hitler might still be alive in Tyrol and that her own flight to that area, after she left the bunker, might be more than coincidental, she appears deeply upset that such opinions are even entertained. She says only, "Hitler is dead! The man I saw in the shelter could not have lived. He had no reason to live and the tragedy was that he knew it well, knew it perhaps better than anyone else did."

52. HANNA'S OPINION OF THE FUHRER: It is apparent from Reitsch's conversation that she held the Fuehrer in high esteem. It is probably also true when she says that her "good" opinion suffered considerably during the closing stages of the War. She is emphatic when she describes the apparent mismanagement she observed and learned of in the bunker. For instance Berlin had been depleted of arms to hold the Oder. When that line fell it appeared that no coherent defense plan of Berlin had been prepared, certainly adequate arrangements had not been made to direct the defense from the bunker. There was no other communication equipment available than the telephone that led only to the flak tower. It appears that only in the last moment had he decided to direct the battle from the shelter and then did not have the first tools with which to operate. No maps. No battle plans. No radio. Only a hastily prepared messenger service and the one telephone were available. The fact that unknown to Hitler, the Wenck army had been destroyed almost days before was only one example of the inadequacies. All of which resulted in the Fuehrer of Germany sitting helplessly in his cellar impotently playing at his table-top war.

53. Reitsch claims that Hitler the idealist died, and his country with him, because of the incompetence of Hitler the soldier and Hitler the statesman. She concludes, still with a faint touch of allegiance, that no one who knew him would deny his idealistically motivated intentions nor could they deny that he was simply infinitely incompetent to rule his country, that one of his great faults was proper character analysis in the people about him which led to the selection of persons equally incompetent to fill important positions. (Most important example: Goering).

54. She repeatedly remarks that never again must such a person be allowed to gain control of Germany or of any country. But strangely enough she does not appear to hold him personally responsible for many of the wrongs and evils that she recognizes completely and is quick to point out. She says rather, "A great part of the fault lies with those who led him, lured him, criminally misdirected him, and informed him falsely. But that he himself selected the men who led him can never be forgiven."

55. A CRIMINAL AGAINST THE WORLD: "Hitler ended his life as a criminal against the world", but she is quick to add, "he did not begin it that way. At first his thoughts were only of how to make Germany healthy again, how to give his people a life free from economic insufficiencies and social maladjustments. To do this he gambled much, with a stake that no man has the right to jeopardize—the lives

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of his people. This was the first great wrong, his first great failure. But once the first few risks had been successful, he fell into the faults of every gambler, he risked more and more, and at the time that he was more easily led to the next gamble." According to Reitsch it all began with the occupation of the Ruhr. This was the first and most delicate gamble of all and when the world did not answer his Ruhr bluff with war every succeeding risk became progressively easier.

56. Each success made the enthusiasm of the people greater and this gave him the necessary support to take the next step. The end result, Reitsch claims, was that Hitler himself underwent a character change that transformed him from an ideologically motivated benefactor to a genuine, scheming despot, a victim of his own delusions of grandeur. "Never again", she continues, "in the history of the world must such power be allowed to rest with one man."

57. SCIENCE COUNCIL: On the night of the 27th to 28th the Russian bombardment of the Chancellery reached the highest pitch it had yet attained. The Academy, to those in the shelter below, was astounding. It seemed as if each shell landed in exactly the same place as the one before, all dead-center on the Chancellery buildings. As this indicated that the Russian ground troops could overrun the area at any moment, another suicide council was called by the Fuehrer. All plans as to the destruction of the bodies of everyone in the shelter were gone over again. The decision was that as soon as the Russians reached the Chancellery grounds the mass suicide would begin. Last instructions were given as to the use of the poison vials. Reitsch still has hers in her possession. It was examined by the interrogator and found to be a little brass capsule with removable top, containing a fragile glass bottle filled with about half a teaspoonful of amber liquid. The bottle was to be broken between the teeth and the liquid quickly swallowed).

58. The group was as hypnotized with the suicide rehearsal and a general discussion was entered into to determine in which manner the most thorough destruction of the human body could be performed. Then everyone made little speeches swearing allegiance again and again to the Fuehrer and to Germany. Yet, through it all, still ran the faint hope that Wenck might get in and hold long enough to effect an evacuation. But even on the 27th, Reitsch claims, the others paid lip-service to the Wenck hope only to follow the lead of the Fuehrer. Almost everyone had given up all thoughts of being saved, and said so to each other whenever Hitler was not present. Closing the discussions on the destruction of the bodies there was talk that SS men would be assigned to see that no trace remained. Throughout the day of the 28th the intensity of the Russian fire continued while the suicide talk kept pace with the shelling in the shelter below.

59. THE HIMMLER BETRAYAL: Then on the 29th fell the greatest blow of all. A telegram arrived which indicated that the staunch and trusted Himmler had joined Goering on the traitor list. It was like a death blow to the entire assembly. Reitsch claims that men and women alike cried and screamed with rage, fear and desperation, all mixed into one emotional spasm. Himmler the protector of the Reich, now a traitor was impossible. The telegram message was that Himmler had contacted the British and American authorities through Sweden to propose a capitulation to the San Francisco conference. Hitler had raged as a mad man. His color rose to a heated red and his face was virtually unrecognizable. Additional evidence of Himmler's "treachery" was that he had asked not to be identified with the capitulation proposals; American authorities were said to have abided by this request, while the British did not.

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60. After the lengthy outburst Hitler sank into a stupor and for a time the entire bunker was silent.

61. Later came the anticlimactic news that the Russians would make a full force bid to over-run the Chancellery on the morning of the 30th. Even then shell-ash fire was beginning to sprinkle the area above the shelter. Ground reports indicated that the Russians were nearing the Potsdamer Platz and were losing thousands of men as they fanatically prepared the positions from which the attack of the next morning was to be launched.

62. Reitsch claims that everyone again looked to their poison.

63. ORDERS TO LEAVE THE SHELTER: At one-thirty on the morning of the 30th of April Hitler, with chalk-white face, came to Greim's room and slumped down on the edge of the bed. "Our only hope is Wenck", he said, "and to make his entry possible we must call up every available aircraft to cover his approach." Hitler then claimed that he had just been informed that Wenck's guns were already shelling the Russians in Potsdamer Platz.

64. "Every available plane", Hitler said, "must be called up by daylight, therefore it is my order to you to return to Rechlin and muster your planes from there. It is the task of your aircraft to destroy the positions from which the Russians will launch their attack on the Chancellery. With Luftwaffe help Wenck may get through. That is the first reason why you must leave the shelter. The second is that Himmler must be stopped", and immediately he mentioned the SS Fuehrer his voice became more unsteady and both his lips and hands trembled. The order to Greim was that if Himmler had actually made the reported contact, and could be found, he should immediately be arrested.

65. "A traitor must never succeed me as Fuehrer! You must get out to insure that he will not."

66. Greim and Reitsch protested vehemently that the attempt would be futile, that it would be impossible to reach Rechlin, that they preferred to die in the shelter, that the mission could not succeed, that it was insane.

67. "As soldiers of the Reich", Hitler answered, "it is our holy duty to exhaust every possibility. This is the only chance of success that remains. It is your duty and mine to take it."

68. Hanna was not convinced, "No, no", she screamed, "what can be accomplished now, even if we should get through. Everything is lost, to try to change it now is insane." But Greim thought differently. "Hanna", he said, "we are the only hope for those who remain here. If the chance is just the smallest, we owe it to them to take it. Not to do so would rob them of the only light that remains. Maybe Wenck is there. Maybe we can help, but whether we can or cannot, we will go."

69. Hanna, still convinced as to the absurdity of attempting an escape went alone to the Fuehrer while Greim was making his preparations. Through her sobbing she begged, "Mein Fuehrer why, why don't you let us stay?" He looked at her for a moment and said only: "God protect you."

70. THE LEAVE TAKING: Preparations were quickly made and Reitsch is graphic in her description of the leave taking. Below, late Goering's Liaison officer with the Fuehrer and now a staunch Greim-man said, "You must get out. It depends upon you to tell the

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truth to our people, to save the 'honor' of the Luftwaffe, to save the meaning of Germany for the world." Everyone gave the departing due some token, something to take back into the world. Everyone wrote quick, last minute letters for them to take along. Reitsch says that she and Grein destroyed all but two letters which were from Goebbels and his wife to their oldest son, by Frau Goebbels first marriage, who was then in an allied prisoner of war camp. These Reitsch still had. Frau Goebbels also gave her a diamond ring from her finger to wear in her memory.

71. Thirty minutes after Hitler had given the order they left the shelter.

72. THE FLIGHT OUT OF BERLIN: Outside the whole city was aflame and heavy bombardment fire was already plainly audible a short distance away. SS troops, committed to guarding Hitler to the end, were moving about. The women brought up a small armored vehicle which was to take Reitsch and Grein to where an Arado 96 was hidden near Brandenburger Tor. The sky was filled with the thunder of shells, some of which landed so close that their vehicle was knocked out several hundred yards short of the revetment where the Arado was stationed. (Reitsch claims that she is certain that this was the last craft available. The possibility of another plane having gotten in and possibly out again with Hitler as passenger, she dismisses as highly unlikely as Grein would certainly have been informed. She knows that such a message was never delivered. She knows too, that Grein had ordered other planes in but that each craft was shot down in the attempt and as Russian troops already solidly ringed the city, she is certain that Hitler never left Berlin.)

73. The broad street leading from Brandenburger Tor was to be used for take-off. About 400 meters of uncratered pavement was available as run-way. The take-off was made under hailing Russian fire and as the plane rose to roof-top level it was picked up by countless searchlights and at once bracketed in a barrage of shelling. Explosions tossed the craft like a feather, but only a few splinters hit the plane. Reitsch circled to about 20,000 feet from where Berlin was a sea of flames beneath her. From that altitude the magnitude of the destruction of Berlin she describes as stark and fantastic. Heading north, 50 minutes saw them in Wechlin, where the landing was again made through a screen of Russian fighter craft.

74. THE LAST GERMAN EFFORTS: Grein at once issued the orders calling all available craft to the aid of Berlin. Having performed the first of Hitler's commands he immediately decided to fly to Ploen, near Kiel, to determine what information Doenitz might have regarding Himmler. A Ducker 181 was used and by the time they got into the air German aircraft were already arriving in compliance with Grein's order. The entire heavens were soon a seething mass of German and Russian planes. Reitsch kept her own plane at 1 and 2 meters altitude and even with such protection against visibility she was twice unsuccessfully attacked. Landing at Lubeck still necessitated an automobile trip to Ploen, during which time they were again under constant Russian attack. On arrival they found that Doenitz knew nothing of Himmler's actions. The next move was to see Keitel in the event that a change in air tactics should be employed in helping Wenck in his entry into Berlin.

75. THE NEWS OF WENCK'S NONEXISTENCE: Keitel was found in the early morning of the first of May and told that the news that Wenck's army had long been destroyed or captured. And that he (Keitel) had sent word to Hitler to that effect the day before. (30th of April)

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76. Grein and Reitsch now knew that Hitler must surely have given up all hope and both fully expected that the well rehearsed suicide plans had already been put into operation.

77. THE "NEW" GOVERNMENT: The advance of the English necessitated a retreat into Schleswig late on the first of May. Here, the same evening, Reitsch and Grein learned that the announcement of Hitler's death had been made and that he had been succeeded by Doenitz. On the 2nd of May the new government was called to Ploen. Grein and Reitsch, to receive orders from Doenitz as to immediate Luftwaffe activities, had the additional purpose of meeting Himmler and confronting him with the betrayal story.

78. HIMMLER'S CAPITULATION EXPLANATION: Himmler arrived late so that all the others were in the conference room, leaving Reitsch alone when he walked in.

"One moment Herr Reichsfuehrer, a matter of the highest importance, if you can spare the time?" Reitsch asked.

Himmler seemed almost jovial as he said, "Of course."

"Is it true, Herr Reichsfuehrer, that you contacted the Allies with proposals of peace without orders to do so from Hitler?"

"But, of course."

"You betrayed your Fuehrer and your people in the very darkest hour? Such a thing is high treason, Herr Reichsfuehrer. You did that when your place was actually in the bunker with Hitler?"

"High treason? No! You'll see, history will weigh it differently. Hitler wanted to continue the fight. He was mad with his pride and his 'honor'. He wanted to shed more German blood when there was none left to flow. Hitler was insane. It should have been stopped long ago."

"Insane? I came from him less than 36 hours ago. He died for the cause he believed in. He died bravely and filled with the 'honor' you speak of, while you and Goering and the rest must now live as branded traitors and cowards."

"I did as I did to save German blood, to rescue what was left of our country."

"You speak of German blood, Herr Reichsfuehrer? You speak of it now? You should have thought of it years ago, before you became identified with the useless shedding of so much of it."

A sudden strafing attack terminated the conversation.

79. THE LAST ORDERS TO HOLD THE RUSSIANS: Grein indicated that little had been decided at the first Doenitz war council. However everyone was in accord that at best, resistance would only be possible for a few days longer. In the meantime commanders against the Russians were to hold to the last to enable as many civilians as possible to flee from the advance. Reitsch claims that Grein, whose leg was becoming increasingly worse, insisted upon flying immediately to Feldmarschall Joerner, in command of troops in Silesia and Czechoslovakia, to instruct him that he should resist even after the capitulation order was released to give the civilians time to flee to the American zone.

80. On the flight to Joerner, Grein's foot became so bad that he had momentary lapses of unconsciousness. Upon arrival Joerner indicated that he had already decided to hold as long as possible and had issued orders to that effect even before Grein's arrival.

81. It was then decided to fly on the Kesselring with the same instructions, but Grein's leg was by now so critical that further movement was impossible. From the 3rd of May to the 7th it was necessary to remain at Joerner's headquarters in Koenigsplatz where Reitsch nursed Grein until he could move about again.

82. On the night of the 7th of May they took off in a Dornier 217 to fly to Graz where Kesselring was reported to be. Directly over the field German planes severely damaged their craft which crash landed at the edge of the field. Reitsch and Grein were of the understanding that the capitulation would come on the night of the 9th of May and when it was learned that Kesselring had left Graz for Zell am See they flew on in an effort to instruct him to confine some of his troops with those holding the Russians.

83. THE END AT ZELL AM SEE: They arrived at Zell am See flying a Fiesler-Storch, and reported to General Koller, Chief of the GAF General Staff, who was to tell them of Kesselring's whereabouts. Here they learned that the capitulation was to be on the 8th instead of the 9th. They still wanted to locate Kesselring but Koller either chose not to tell them where Kesselring was, because it was already too late or else he did not know that Kesselring was in the village of Alldorf, a few miles north of Zell am See. At this news Reitsch and Grein decided that any further efforts on their part were quite useless. Just before the capitulation they left Zell am See for Kitzbühl to place themselves under the care of a well known Doctor who had just opened his hospital there.

84. Reitsch claims that had it not been for the severe agony of Grein's foot she would not have been able to convince him to save his limb. To the last he wanted to encourage resistance against the Russians.

85. WHY THE "REDOUT" WAS NOT UTILIZED: In response to the question as to why the Austria-Southern Germany last stand of resistance was never put into operation, Reitsch has little to add to what is already known. She states that as late as the 15th of April it still seemed that there was every intention of moving the government and military headquarters to Berchtesgaden. All of the bureaus and headquarters in Berlin at that time were on a constant 2 hour alert. From what she heard from Oberst Below and others it appeared that the conference mentioned in paragraph 46 was to decide on the full particulars covering the move. She claims that the reports Hitler received at that time were so shocking that he was convinced that preparations to make "Redoubt" resistance a success would never be completed in time. It was believed that the realization that "Redoubt", of which so much was expected, would have to be crossed off as useless was the major cause of Hitler's breakdown. It was also said that

Goering and Hitler had had a strained conversation regarding this, with Goering insisting on an early evacuation to the "Redoubt" area and Hitler declining in the hope that the Oder would hold. Goering was to have claimed that "Redoubt" was ready for occupancy while Hitler preferred to wait until he could have it's readiness confirmed at the above mentioned conference. It was the talk later at the Doenitz war council and elsewhere that Goering's departure was governed solely by his realization that the Oder would be crossed and by his unfulfilled hope that the partially completed "Redoubt" area would hold.

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Had Goering's coup succeeded, it is believed that "Redoubt" might have been more actively defended. The reasons that it was not: First--Goering's failure. Second--Hitler's belief that continued resistance in Berlin might be more eventful than the sure collapse he saw in an uncompleted "Redoubt."

86. REPORTING TO THE AMERICANS: They arrived in Kitzbuhl on the morning of the 9th and reported to American Military authorities shortly thereafter. Grein was under treatment until the 23rd of May when he was taken to Salzburg, prior to being taken on to Germany as a prisoner of war. He committed suicide with Hitler's poison capsule in Salzburg on the night of the 24th of May. Although he was much less known than his corpulent predecessor, both in Germany or the world, in Hanna's opinion he should have had Goering's position years ago. The fact that he disagreed with Goering on almost every count is, to her, evidence enough of his capabilities.

88. EVALUATION OF SOURCE: It is the opinion of the interrogator that the above information is given with a sincere and conscientious effort to be truthful and exact. The suicide of her family, the death of her closest friend, von Grein, the physical ruin of Germany, and the trying nature of her experiences during the closing years of the war combined themselves to seriously tempt her to commit suicide as well. She claims that the only reason she remained alive is for the sake of the truth; to tell the truth about Goering, "the shallow showman", to tell the truth about Hitler, "the criminal incompetent", and to tell the German people the truth about the dangers of the form of government that the Third Reich gave them. She believes that she is fulfilling much of this mission when she speaks to the interrogator. It is therefore felt that her remarks may be considered as her deepest efforts at sincerity and honesty. At the moment she is undergoing a severe mental struggle in an effort to reconcile her conception of "honor" with her denunciations of Goering, of Himmler, and of Hitler himself. This difficulty appears less great when she is speaking to the interrogator than it is when she speaks to civilians, but from civilians who have led her conversation and then unknown to her, reported the results to the interrogator it appears that she is striving to exert a progressively more democratic influence over her countrymen. It is felt that her idealism and her exact knowledge regarding many of the faults of the Nazi system, if put to proper use, might eventually be of value in the re-education of the German people.

89. (EDITOR'S NOTE) Other reports, covering various phases of Reitsch's knowledge of the Luftwaffe, its research, and its activities, will be issued. Any specific needs of any or all agencies receiving this report should be forwarded to this headquarters with details of information required. No final interrogation report is intended as each separate subject will be handled in detail and summary form. At the completion of necessary interrogation, source will be released to her Salzburg residence unless other action is requested.

ROBERT E. WORK 546
Captain, Air Corps
Chief Interrogator

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1 November 1945

INTERROGATION SUMMARY)

NUMBER

5)

LAST LETTERS FROM HITLER'S AIR RAID SHELTER

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Section I

INTRODUCTION

1. When Hanna Reitsch together with Ritter von Greim, Goering's successor as head of the Luftwaffe, left Hitler's Berlin air raid shelter in the early morning of the 30th of April 1945, (see Interrogation Summary No 1) Reitsch was given letters to take out by various of the occupants who were to remain in the shelter to die with Hitler.

2. These were letters by Goebbels and his wife to their son; one from Eva Braun to her sister, wife of SS Obergruppenfuehrer Fegelein, liaison officer between Himmler and Hitler; one from Hevel, Ribbentrop's representative on Hitler's staff, to the Foreign Office Headquarters in Fuschl, near Salzburg; and one from Martin Bormann to the Reichschancellery Offices which had just evacuated to Berchtesgaden. The fact that she was given these letters to deliver was developed during interrogation, but the fact that two letters (from Goebbels and his wife) were still in her possession was discovered quite accidentally, whereupon she admitted that she and von Greim had destroyed the others.

3. Her reasons for destroying them she gives willingly. Hevel's and Bormann's letters were simply official communications. As the collapse occurred before they could be delivered, she and von Greim considered them to be of no further value (see description of contents, paragraphs 4 and 5 below). The Eva Braun letter was destroyed because she and von Greim both felt that the text was so glaringly theatrical and in such poor adolescent taste that only odious reactions would result should the letter ever fall into German hands. Reitsch remarks that she and von Greim were of the opinion that possible German readers might eulogize Braun as a Nazi Martyr and not be able to read between the lines that this is exactly what Braun intended. Von Greim's remark after he had read the letter was, "It sounds just as childish and obvious as she looks. Tear it up." These letters were taken out of the shelter in the early morning of the 30th of April 1945. As the deaths of the shelter occupants were not announced until the next day, it is possible that later letters and documents might have been brought out.

Section II

ACCOUNT OF THE HEVEL, BORMANN AND EVA BRAUN LETTERS

4. HEVEL'S LETTER: This letter to the Auswertiges Amt (Foreign Office) in Fuschl, near Salzburg, was a brief and insistent request as to why none of the radio messages from the shelter were not being answered. The text as Reitsch remembers it: "Why do you not answer our

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radio messages? Are you receiving them? Information requested is badly needed here. Answer immediately." It was not addressed to any particular person and was to be delivered to anyone of Ribbentrop's staff who might be at the Fuschl office. Reitsch has no idea as to what the "information requested" refers.

5. BORMANN'S LETTER: When Bormann handed Reitsch his letter he indicated that it contained nothing of great importance and would not involve any danger should it be lost. It was addressed to the Reichschancellery offices which had just moved to Berchtesgaden and asked why communications were not being maintained. It closed with instructions to contact the shelter immediately and gave a description as to how this should be done.

6. EVA BRAUN'S LETTER: Braun wrote to her sister, wife of Gruppenfuehrer Fegelein, whom Hitler had shot on the 28th of April because he deserted from the Fuehrer's shelter. Following is given the best version that Reitsch, months after reading the letter, is able to reconstruct but it must not in any way be considered as the verbatim text of the Braun letter:

"I must write you these words so that you will not feel sad over our end here in the shelter. It is rather we who are filled with sorrow because it is your fate to live on into the chaos that will follow. For myself I am glad to die here; glad to die at the side of the Fuehrer; but most of all glad that the horror now to come is spared me. What could life still give me? It has already been perfect. It has already given me its best and its fullest. Why should I go on living? This is the time to die; the right time. With the Fuehrer I have had everything. To die now, beside him, completes my happiness. Live on as well and as happily as you can. Shed no tears nor be regretful over our deaths. It is the perfect and proper ending. None of us would change it now. It is the right end for a German woman."

Section III

ENGLISH AND GERMAN TEXTS OF GOEBBELS' LETTER

7. ENGLISH TEXT: The following is a translation of the letter written by Dr. Goebbels in Hitler's Berlin shelter on the 28th of April 1945 to his step-son, Harald Quandt, then a PW in the Allied camp, P.O.W.L. #280 Algiers, PW #191901:

"My Dear Harald,

"We sit locked in the Fuehrer's shelter in the Reichschancellery, fighting for our lives and our honor. How this battle will end God alone knows. But I know that, alive or dead, we will not leave the shelter unless we leave it with honor and glory. I hardly believe that we shall ever see each other again, therefore, it is likely that these will be the last lines you will ever receive from me. I expect from you, should you outlive this war, that you do only that which will honor your mother and your father. It is not necessary that we be alive to influence the future of our people. It is likely that you will be the only one left to carry on the traditions of our family. Do this always in such a manner that we would never need be ashamed of your actions.

"Germany will outlive this terrible war, but only if it has examples upon which to guide its reconstruction. Such an example we want to give here! You can be proud to possess a mother such as yours. Yesterday evening the Fuehrer gave her the gold party insignia which he wore on his coat for so many years, and she justly deserved it. In the future you must know only one duty: To prove yourself worthy of the great sacrifice which we are prepared and determined to make here. I

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know that you will do that. Don't let yourself be confused by the roar that will now reign throughout the world. The lies will one day break down under their own weight and the truth will again triumph. The hour will come when we will stand pure and undefiled above the world, as pure and undefiled as our beliefs and aims have always been.

"Farewell, my dear Harald. Whether we shall ever see each other again lies in the hands of God. If it is not to be, then always be proud to have belonged to a family that even in the face of disaster remained true to the Fuehrer to the very last and true to his pure and holy cause.

All the best and my heartfelt greetings,

Your Papa."

8. REITSCH'S EVALUATION OF GOEBBELS' LETTER: Reitsch claims that the Goebbels letter made such a poor impression on both herself and Greim that they decided to make no immediate efforts to deliver it. First of all she claims that the letter is filled with various figures of speech that have no resemblance to the truth as she and Greim saw it in the shelter. Contrary to what Goebbels writes, they were not "locked" in the shelter nor were they "fighting" for their lives. But more than that she and Greim objected to the overall tone of the letter. Both felt that Goebbels was not writing to his son but rather to the German people in an effort to solidify such remnants of the Nazi ideology that might outlive the German collapse. Both Greim and Reitsch held Goebbels in rather low regard and felt justified in deciding that this, "Goebbels last propagandic effort" should not fall into the hands of possible German readers. This obvious bid for martyrdom that the letter reflected, Reitsch and Greim both felt might work an unhealthy influence should the letter ever be publicized in German channels. They would both have preferred to find some inkling of regret or some faint suspicion that a system which had caused such suffering and useless destruction, both of the German people and the rest of the world, might not be as "pure" and as "holy" as Goebbels letter claimed.

9. GERMAN TEXT: The following is the German text of Goebbels' letter:

"Mein lieber Harald!

"Wir sitzen eingeschlossen im Fuehrerbunker in der Reichskanzlei und kämpfen um unser Leben und um unsere Ehre. Wie dieser Kampf ausgehen wird, das weiss nur Gott allein. Ich aber weiss, dass wir nur mit Ehre und Ruhm lebend oder tot daraus hervorgehen werden. Ich glaube kaum, dass wir uns noch einmal wiedersehen werden. Darum sind dies wahrscheinlich die letzten Zeilen, die Du von mir empfängst. Ich erwarte von Dir, dass Du, wenn Du diesen Krieg überstehst Deiner Mutter und mir nur Ehre machen wirst. Es ist garnicht nötig, dass wir lebend da sind, um auf die Zukunft unseres Volkes einzuwirken. Du wirst unter Umständen der Einzige sein, der unsere Familientradition weiter fortführt. Tue es immer so, dass wir uns dessen nicht zu schämen brauchen.

"Deutschland wird diesen furchtbaren Krieg überstehen, aber nur, dann, wenn unser Volk Beispiele vor Augen hat, an denen es sich wieder aufrichten kann. Ein solches Beispiel wollen wir geben. Du kannst stolz darauf sein, eine Mutter wie die Deine zu besitzen. Der Fuehrer hat ihr gestern Abend das goldene Parteiabzeichen, das er jahrelang an seinem Rock trug, überreicht und sie hat es auch verdient. Du darfst in Zukunft nur eine Aufgabe kennen, Dich nicht vom Lärm der Welt, der nun einsetzen wird, verwirren. Die Lügen werden eines Tages in sich zusammen fallen und über ihnen wieder die Wahrheit triumphieren. Es wird die Stunde sein, da wir über allen stehen, rein und makellos, so wie unser Glaube und Streben immer gewesen ist.

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"Leb' wohl, mein lieber Harald! Ob wir uns jemals wiedersehen werden, das steht bei Gott! Wenn nein, dann sei immer stolz darauf, zu einer Familie zu gehören, die dem Führer und seiner reinen, heiligen Sache, auch im Unglück bis zum letzten Augenblick treu geblieben ist.

"Alles Gute und meine herzlichsten Grüsse,

Dein Papa."

Section IV

ENGLISH AND GERMAN TEXTS OF FRAU GOEBBELS' LETTER

10. ENGLISH TEXT: The following is a translation of the letter written by Frau Goebbels, also to Lt. Harald Quandt, her son by a previous marriage:

"In the Fuehrer's Bunker 28th April 1945.

"My Beloved Son,

"We have already been here in the Fuehrer's shelter for 6 days; papa, your six brothers and sisters, and I. We are here to give our National Socialistic way of life its only possible and honorable ending.

"Whether you will ever receive this letter I do not know, but perhaps some considerate soul will make it possible for you to receive my last greetings. You must know that it was against Papa's wishes that I remained here with him, and that last Sunday the Fuehrer himself wanted to help me to get out. You know your Mother, for we are of the same blood. For me there was no other alternative. Our beautiful idea is being destroyed, and with it goes everything I knew in this life as fine, worthy of admiration, noble and good.

"Life will not be worth living in the world that will come after Hitler and National Socialism. Therefore, I have also brought the children here with me. They are too precious for the life that will come after us; a merciful God will understand me when I myself help them to a merciful deliverance. You will live on and for you I have but one request: Never forget that you are a German. Do nothing against your honor, and take care that you do nothing with your life that will have made our death purposeless.

"The children are wonderful. Without assistance they help themselves in these more than primitive surroundings. Whether they have to sleep on the floor, whether they are unable to wash, or whether they have nothing to eat, there is neither a word of complaint nor tears. Even for me the shell crashings are nerve racking. The small children comfort the even smaller and the fact of their being here is a blessing if only because every now and then they coax a smile from the Fuehrer.

"Yesterday evening the Fuehrer removed his golden insignia and pinned it to my dress. I am proud and overjoyed. God grant that I will have the strength to accomplish the last and most difficult task of all.

"We have only one aim left to us: To be true unto death to the Fuehrer; that we be allowed to end our lives together with him is a merciful fate upon which we could hardly have counted.

"Harald, beloved boy, I give you the best life has taught me, to take on your way with you: Be True! Be true to yourself, true to your people, and most of all be true to your Fatherland--in each and every respect.

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"To begin a new page is difficult. Who knows whether I shall still have time to fill it, but I want to give you so much of my love, so much strength, and to take from you all the sorrow of our deaths. Be proud of us and try to keep us ever in a proud and joyous remembrance. Everyone must one day die. Is it not better, more honorable and braver to have lived a short and happy life rather than a long one under disgraceful conditions?

"This letter is to go out. Hanna Reitsch will take it along. She is to fly back out again.

"I put my arms about you with the deepest, most heartfelt mother's love.

"My beloved son, Live For Germany!

Your Mother."

11. REITSCH'S EVALUATION OF FRAU GOEBBELS' LETTER: Reitsch's criticisms of Frau Goebbels' letter are almost identical to those she makes of the little Doctor's letter. Additionally she points out that Frau Goebbels found it just as difficult to adhere to the truth as her husband found it. Frau Goebbels remarked that the children had to sleep on the floor, were unable to wash, and had little to eat, all the result of the "primitive surroundings." Reitsch found the living conditions in the shelter the most luxurious she had experienced throughout the war. Reitsch and Greim decided that this letter should not be delivered either because it too might help crystalize the martyr-minded left-overs of the Nazi idea. Reitsch is not surprised at the tone of the letter as she describes Frau Goebbels as the epitome of her husband's teachings.

12. GERMAN TEXT: The following is the German text of Frau Goebbels' letter:

"Im Führerbunker den 28 April 1945.

"Mein geliebter Sohn!

"Nun sind wir schon 6 Tage hier im Führerbunker, Pappa. Deine 6 kleinen Geschwister und ich, um unseren nationalsozialistischen Leben den einzigmöglichen, ehrenvollen Abschluss zu geben.

"Ob Du diesen Brief erhältst weiss ich nicht, vielleicht gibt es doch eine menschliche Seele, die es mir ermöglicht, dir meine letzten Grüsse zu senden. Du sollst wissen, dass ich gegen den Willen Pappa's bei ihm geblieben bin, dass noch vorigen Sonntag der Führer mir helfen wollte hier heraus zu kommen. Du kennst Deine Mutter, wir haben dasselbe Blut, es gab für mich keine Überlegung. Unsere herrliche Idee geht zu Grunde, mit ihr alles was ich Schönes, Bewundernswertes, Edles und Gutes in meinem Leben gekannt habe.

"Die Welt, die nach dem Führer und dem Nationalsozialismus kommt ist nicht mehr wert darin zu leben und deshalb habe ich auch die Kinder hierher mitgenommen. Sie sind zu schade für das nach uns kommende Leben und ein Gnädiger Gott wird mich verstehen, wenn ich selbst ihnen die Erlösung geben werde. Du wirst weiter leben und ich habe die einzige Bitte an Dich: Vergiss nie, dass Du ein Deutscher bist, tue nie etwas, was gegen die Ehre ist und Sorge dafür, dass durch Dein Leben unser Tod nicht umsonst gewesen ist!

"Die Kinder sind wunderbar! Ohne Hilfe helfen sie sich selbst in diesen mehr als primitiven Verhältnissen, Ob sie auf dem Boden schlafen, ob sie sich waschen können, ob sie zu essen haben und was, niemals ein Wort der Klage oder ein Weinen. Die Einschlüsse hier sind selbst für mich eine Nervenprobe. Die Kleinen beruhigen die noch Kleineren und ihre Anwesenheit hier ist schon dadurch ein Sagen, dass sie dem Führer hin und wieder ein Lächeln abgewinnen.

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"Gestern Abend hat der Führer sein goldenes Abzeichen abgenommen und mir angeheftet. Ich bin stolz und glücklich! Gott gebe, dass mir die Kraft bleibe, um das Letzte Schwerste zu tun!!

"Wir haben nur noch ein Ziel: Treue bis den Tod zum Führer und dass wir mit ihm und zusammen mit ihm das Leben beenden können ist eine Gnade des Schicksals mit der wir niemals zu rechnen wagten.

"Harald, Lieber Junge, ich gebe Dir das Beste noch auf den Weg, was das Leben mich gelehrt hat: Sei treu! Treu Dir selbst, treu den Menschen und treu Deinem Land gegenüber. In jeder und jeder Beziehung!

"Einen neuen Bogen anzufangen ist schwer. Wer weiß, ob ich ihn ausfüllen kann, aber ich möchte noch soviel Liebe Dir geben, soviel Kraft und Dir jede Trauer über unseren Verlust nehmen. Sei stolz auf uns und versuche uns in stolzer, freundiger Erinnerung zu behalten. Einmal muss jeder Mensch sterben und ist es nicht schöner ehrenvoll und tapfer kurz zu leben, als unter schmachvoller Bedingung ein langes zu führen?

"Der Brief soll raus—Hanna Reitsch nimmt ihn mit. Sie fliegt nochmals raus!

"Ich umarme Dich in innigster, herzlichster, mütterlichster Liebe.

"Mein geliebter Sohn! Lebe für Deutschland!

Deine Mutter."

Robert E. Work
ROBERT E. WORK EAD
Captain, Air Corps
Chief Interrogator.

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35,23
Gen Donovan

AIR DIVISION
HEADQUARTERS UNITED STATES FORCES IN AUSTRIA
Air Interrogation Unit (USDIC)
APO 777 US ARMY

D/EAB/REB/hah

16 November 1945

INTERROGATION SUMMARY)

NUMBER

8)

CONDENMATION OF GOERING BY HANNA REITSCH

1. INTRODUCTION: This report concerns itself with the condemnation of Hermann Goering as leader of the German Luftwaffe as expressed by Hanna Reitsch, the prominent German test pilot and aeronautical research expert. It is felt that her close contacts and constant movement through the top-brackets of the Luftwaffe make her opinions of value in determining the collapse of the GAF to the extent that it is contributable to Goering. Inasmuch as Reitsch is closely familiar with the orders, ideas, and mannerisms of Goering it is believed that her opinions may be illuminating and accurate. Her complete cooperation and sincere effort to tell the truth should also be considered in properly evaluating the following material. This account was prepared partly from a paper written by Reitsch and partly through interrogation. It is important to note that remarks Reitsch has made on the subject to civilians and to non-interrogating American officers have been checked and found to completely confirm her own written report as well as her statements during interrogation.

a. The report is written to conform to her own paper and to the remarks she made, both under direct and indirect interrogation. It is a composite account of her opinions as obtained through these methods.

b. It is felt that the material may be of value to help clarify various phases of Goering's guilt at the coming trial and also to assist in more clearly evaluating Goering's role in the disintegration of the Luftwaffe.

2. GOERING--THE GROSS INCOMPETENT: "I cannot and will not pretend to give a complete picture of Goering," says Reitsch, "I can only tell of Goering as I knew him and of the things he did that must be told in the name and for the sake of the truth. It is difficult after the down-fall of one's country to attack a former-great and to expose him before his own countrymen and in the eyes of the world for the gross incompetent that he is. But in spite of these qualifying scruples, anyone in a position to tell the truth to present and future generations must speak up, particularly if it is about a man who had such a high-ranking position, who was generally considered as a shining example of sacrificial loyalty and fulfillment of duty, but who nevertheless caused the greatest of harm and finally descended to the most shameful treachery. Anyone, particularly a German, who possesses knowledge to place Goering in his proper light owes it to himself and to the world to impart it. Therefore, I must make this burning accusation against the man who let the decisive weapon (the GAF) be destroyed through his own fault, and who through his personal attitude, example, and character betrayed his own people, thus loading upon himself the immeasurable blame for the suffering of a whole nation."

3. HITLER REMOVES GOERING AND CALLS HIS SUCCESSOR: "On 24 April 1945, Adolf Hitler called General Oberst Ritter von Greim, the Commanding General of Luftflotte 6, to the Reichschancellory in Berlin in order to appoint him successor to Goering. The radiogram did not state the reason but simply ordered him to come to Berlin immediately. Although it was known that the Russians already encircled the city, General von Greim believed that it might still be possible for me to fly him in."

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4. ARRIVAL AT HITLER'S SHELTER: Greim and Reitsch arrived in the shelter between 1800 and 1900 hours on the evening of the 26th of April. First to meet them was Frau Goebbels, who fell upon Reitsch with tears and kisses, expressing her astonishment that anyone still possessed the courage and loyalty to come to the Fuehrer, in stark contrast to all those who had deserted him. Greim was immediately taken to the operating room where Hitler's physician tended a foot injury that Greim had received from Russian ground fire as they flew low over Berlin.

a. Hitler came into the operating room, according to Reitsch, with his face showing deep gratitude over Greim's coming. He remarked something to the effect that even a soldier has a right to disobey an order when everything indicated that to carry it out would be futile and hopeless. Greim then reported his presence in the official manner and told Hitler what had happened and how they had managed to get into Berlin and to the shelter.

b. "The Fuehrer quietly listened," says Reitsch, "and at the end of the report tears came into his eyes. He took von Greim by the hand and clasped me around the shoulders and said, 'There is still some loyalty and courage left in the world,' and then turning to von Greim, he asked whether he had any idea why he had been called in. Von Greim said that he did not."

5. HITLER'S DENUNCIATION OF GOERING: "I have called you to me," Hitler said, "because Hermann Goering has betrayed and deserted both me and his Fatherland. Behind my back he has established connections with the enemy. His action was a mark of cowardice. And against my orders he has gone to save himself at Berchtesgaden. From there he sent me a most disrespectful telegram. He said that I had once named him as my successor and that now, as I was no longer able to rule from Berlin, he was prepared to rule from Berchtesgaden in my place. He closes the wire by stating that if he had no answer from me by nine-thirty on the date of the wire he would assume my answer to be in the affirmative."

a. "It was an ultimatum! A crass ultimatum!! Now nothing remains. Nothing is spared me. No allegiances are kept, no honor lived up to, no disappointments that I have not had, no betrayals that I have not experienced, and now this above all else. Nothing remains. Every wrong has already been done me."

b. "With eyes hard and half closed and in a voice unusually low he went on: 'I immediately had Goering arrested as a traitor to the Reich, took from him all his offices, and removed him from all organizations. That is why I have called you to me. I hereby declare you Goering's successor as Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe. In the name of the German people I give you my hand.'"

6. "TO DIE FOR THE HONOR OF THE LUFTWAFFE:" Greim and Reitsch were deeply stunned with the news of Goering's betrayal. As with one mind they both grasped Hitler's hands and begged to be allowed to remain in the bunker and with their own lives atone for the great wrong that Goering had perpetrated against the Fuehrer, against the German people, and against the Luftwaffe itself. To serve the honor of the flyers who had died, to reestablish the honor of the Luftwaffe that Goering had destroyed, and to guarantee the honor of their land in the eyes of the world, they begged to remain. Hitler agreed to all this and told them they might stay, and told them too that their decision would long be remembered in the history of the Luftwaffe.

a. "In this manner," says Reitsch, "did Goering's betrayal open the door to von Greim and to me so that suddenly we found ourselves as part of the small circle of people who were now prepared to die with the Fuehrer."

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b. "As Hitler asked me to undertake the nursing and caring for the wounded von Grein, I spent most of the time in the shelter at his bed-side, until the Fuehrer, one day before his reported death, sent us out again." (See Interrogation Summary No 1, Hq Air Division, USAF, for complete account of Reitsch and Grein's entrance into Berlin and of the events in Hitler's shelter up to early morning of the 30th of April 1945).

7. THE BLAME BELONGS TO GOERING: "The conversations Grein and I had in the bunker," says Reitsch, "were mainly of the misfortunes that had befallen Germany and, through Germany, had befallen the world. As far back as we let our thoughts go, even back to the very beginnings of the Third Reich and of the Luftwaffe itself, we could find only a long chain of injustice and evil of which most could be directly traced to the guilt of Goering. I do not write these lines out of indiscretion or without long and painful consideration. I write them solely for the sake of the truth, with the full understanding that we Germans must practically relearn the definition of the word. Hardly any of us are free from the insidiousness of the phrase, 'the end justifies the means.' This is because the honor of our land was so slowly and persistently propagandized that we hardly saw how that propaganda actually robbed us of the very honor the propaganda spoke of and how it garbled the truth into a long series of falsehoods."

8. FOR THE SAKE OF THE TRUTH: "It is for the sake of the truth, and to be able to tell the world about it that I remained alive when the terrible things of the last days of the war went on all about me. In fulfilling that purpose I must loudly declare that Goering is in no way representative of the German people as I know they can one day be, nor is he representative of the greatest part of the Luftwaffe. He is rather an unfortunate apparition who has brought untold misery to humanity. Now that we are at last able, we (the people and the Luftwaffe) must divorce ourselves entirely from all his ideas and everything he represented. The Allies must not judge all Germans as counterparts of the Goering pattern. Through Goering and the position he held, the Allies must also recognize that Hitler did not possess the slightest ability of proper character and personality evaluation. And that with eyes closed by idealism and a false conception of honor he would not or could not remove 'old followers' even when he suspected, and in some cases, knew of their inefficiencies and criminal mishandlings. This false sense of honor led him to believe in and support old comrades even after they had long been of great harm to him and to Germany. This same false sense forced him to keep Goering long after he began to suspect Goering's stupidities and failings."

9. GOERING'S CAESAR COMPLEX: "Much of the conduct and manner of Goering is, in my opinion, governed by his abnormal physical condition. Actual functional disturbances could easily be the fundamental cause for his Caesar-complex. No doubt these disturbances are also the cause of his feminine manner which was in such stark contrast to his apparently 'iron commands.' His manner of dress, his use of cosmetics, his personal vanity, his perfume drenched person and clothing, all created an actually decadent impression."

10. MORPHINE AS A CONTRIBUTING FACTOR: "Much of this abnormality was always attributed to his constant use of morphine. Undoubtedly the drug drove him to spasms of ecstasy during which he was known to overrate and regard as fact such things as were solely the product of his drug-doped wishful thinking. During such spells of elation he certainly presented Hitler with a picture that far over-estimated the strength and potentialities of the Luftwaffe. Hitler therefore possessed an entirely erroneous picture of his air strength and was deluded thereby into a false sense of security that prolonged the war much further than might have been the case had he known the true situation."

11. GOERING SELLS GERMANY A "BILL OF GOODS": "A striking example of Goering's falsification occurred when he invited Hitler, a group of ministers, Gau leaders, and other government officials to Rechlin to attend a showing of the newest aircraft types. Goering demonstrated new and capable planes of which not more than a few experimental models existed, and then passed them off as examples of aircraft that were momentarily to come off the production lines in battle-ready thousands. He then conducted sham air battles with out-moded Allied fighter craft to show the tremendous superiority of the German air-arm. The assembled officials returned to their respective communities where they quieted the fears of the populace with glowing accounts of the new planes and weapons that would soon cleanse the air of Allied bombers. This bolstered the faith of the people in final victory and through their resultant concentration of effort, certainly prolonged the war."

12. GOERING DREAMS UP A/C PRODUCTION FIGURES: "Whenever Goering was confronted with aircraft production figures that were less than those he imagined or hoped existed, he would rant and fume and deluge the individual with accusations of sabotage, suspicions of non-support of the war effort. An illustration of this I experienced personally:

a. "In August 1943, after my recovery from a crash with a ME 163 I received a luncheon invitation to his home on Obersalzberg. There were three of us at the table; Goering, his wife, and I. As opening remark of the table conversation Goering wanted to acquaint his wife with the plane in which I had been injured.

b. "'Do you know,' he said, 'the 163 is our newest rocket craft, which climbs with fantastic speed almost straight into the air. Thousands are now ready to sweep the heavens clean and shoot down the bomber formations wherever we can find them.'

c. "I was astounded and almost disbelieved my ears. I knew that at that moment we did not have a single 163 ready for combat and at the very best we could not expect a single craft to be ready before the end of the year. Assembly line production would, for a long time, be out of the question. Even if all the factories designated to produce this craft were set in full and immediate production, the figures he was suggesting were fantastic. I wasn't certain if Goering was joking or if, with intentional exaggeration, he was merely attempting to reassure his wife. That he himself believed what he had said seemed ridiculous.

d. "With a half-laugh, I said, that would be fine, were it true.

e. "Goering seemed astounded at my remark and loudly demanded what I meant by the statement. With stupefied amazement I realized from his retort that he actually believed we did have thousands of the ME 163's. As I felt it to be my duty to tell him the truth I explained what I knew about the production figures and what we could hope for in the way of assembly-line production. Thereupon Goering flew into a rage, and viciously pounding his fist upon the table he screamed that I didn't have the slightest idea, that I didn't know what I was speaking about, and strode angrily out of the room. With horror I realized why no one dared tell him the truth. I became sick with dread when I realized what a completely false impression he must have of the strength and power of his own weapon. As Goering came back into the room I made another attempt to discuss the matter rationally, but it was of no avail. I had simply fallen into the poor graces of the Reichsmarschall and was never again called to see him or consulted on aeronautical matters."

13. GOERING SELECTS HIS AIDS IN HIS OWN IMAGE: "Goering chose such people to fill the positions about him as mirrored his own personality; men who were self-centered, incompetent, and catering. It was men

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like these who influenced the spirit and manner of the Luftwaffe. Often they possessed not the slightest knowledge or technical understanding of their jobs and held them only because they were friendly, congenial, or hero-worshippers of Goering. Even when one of these dared give Goering information that did not laud or reflect the superiority of the Luftwaffe, they were immediately removed. An example is Udet, who was certainly one of Germany's greatest flyers. His appointment by Goering as Chief of the Luftwaffe's Technical Branch was an error that even Udet himself recognized, knowing himself to be neither an administrator nor organizer. His inevitable failure in the position, Hitler's evidenced disgust with that failure, and the personal denunciation of Goering drove Udet to suicide.

a. "The one-time Chief of the General Staff, General Jeschonneck, also took his life over despair of Goering's mismanagement. Goering, grief stricken, attended the funeral of both and with tears in his eyes he bewailed the loss of his 'beloved airmen'.

b. "Jeschonneck's successor, General Korton, later killed for his participation in the July 20 assassination attempt, and his successor, General Koller, were both driven almost insane through Goering's stupid inefficiencies. I am sure that General Koller can and would be glad to give full information regarding Goering's character and mishandlings. I am also sure that Major Krogmann, General Korton's Chief of Staff, would be able to give further information on the deceased Korton's relations and opinions of Goering.

c. "That Feldmarschall Greim took his life on the 24th of May 1945 as he was being taken to Germany as a prisoner of war was also largely due to Goering. I am sure that Greim was not able to reconcile his honor as a soldier with giving the information he would have had to give regarding the despicable traits and blunderings of Goering, his former Commanding Officer, who in his own mind he damned as the incompetent who bore the greatest guilt for the useless continuation of the war."

14. GOERING'S TECHNICAL SHORTCOMINGS: "An air force is a technical weapon and in its development engineers, research men, scientists, and industrialists must be allowed to speak. If this is not understood, as Goering did not understand it, it was inevitable that the Luftwaffe would crumble through leadership that was not short of criminal.

a. "As Research Director of the Luftwaffe, Prof. Dr. Walter Georgii of Ainring, Germany, can give a full picture of Goering's lack of interest and awareness in research matters." (See Interrogation Summary No 2, Air Division, USFA, for Prof. Georgii's account of Goering.)

b. "Of Goering's relations with Luftwaffe engineers and technicians both Feldmarschall Milch and Dipl. Ing. Otto Fuchs, Berlin-Koepenick, Wendenschlossstrasse, can give complete information.

c. "The fact that Goering made himself into the well known 'Hermann Meier' is only superficial, but indicative evidence of what can be documented by those named above. Goering always heeded the pseudo-scientists and engineers who gave him glowing accounts and promised other wonders for the immediate future that would be even more glowing, in spite of the fact that competent men saw the pitfalls and impossibilities. But as always these uncolored accounts were consistently disregarded and eventually even forbidden entrance."

15. THE "VOLKSJAEGER" BLUNDER: "A shocking example of Goering's faulty judgment was the matter of the 'Volksjaeger'. It was in favor of this new plane that Goering allowed himself to almost destroy the last hope left to the Luftwaffe in the fall of 1944--namely the hope that lay in the ME 262. The ME 262 was at this time fully tested and found to

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possess flight characteristics that were almost flawless and certainly exceeded those of any other German craft and of any known Allied plane. It was then of the gravest importance, in the fall of 1944, to get the ME 262 on an immediate assembly-line production basis. With everything ready Goering gave ear to the proposed 'Volksjaeger' plan, for which only the roughest, first-stage drawings had been accomplished, and from which a plane was to evolve that admittedly possessed poorer flight qualities and more limited potentialities than the ME 262.

a. "Ambitious construction men, motivated by interests of self-gain, promised Goering that the 'Volksjaeger' could be perfected from the basic drawing-board sketches, in the fall of 1944, to assembly-line production by March 1945 without affecting the ME 262 program. Countless aircraft engineers warned Goering of the plan's impracticability and fell into immediate disfavor as a result. Every designer, test-pilot, and constructor knew how much time would be required to develop an entirely new craft. Only Goering and his momentary favorites did not, or would not, recognize this actuality. Result, of course, was that the 'last-hope' ME 262 did suffer through the 'Volksjaeger' program. The main reason for this was that Generaldirektor Kessler, long connected and acquainted with the ME 262's evolution and in charge of its assembly-line production planning was removed by Goering and put to work on the 'Volksjaeger' project.

b. "The final result was that the ME 262 program was irreparably damaged and that the 'Volksjaeger' as everyone suspected, was another 'too-late' and a complete failure." (Full information on Goering's roll in the "Volksjaeger" affair, Reitsch claims, could be obtained from Dipl. Ing. Voigt of Messerschmitt.)

16. GOERING THE COLLECTOR AND ABNORMAL EGOTIST: "It is general information," Claims Reitsch, "that Goering was the greatest corruptionist of the Third Reich, that he used his position without restraint to collect and confiscate treasures of art, castles, villas, and untold sums of money. In his personality and morphine-sickened egotism, I see the blame for his inefficiencies and despicable characteristics. Through this came his excesses, his blunderings, the loss of the trust of most of his officers, the contempt of research and technical men, and finally even the one-time good humored faith on the part of many of the people changed to outright disgust."

17. THE ANTI-GOERING TREND: "Complaints against Goering came from all possible sources and usually found their way to Himmler's desk. Through Himmler I became acquainted with many of these. Often they begged Himmler to take control of the Luftwaffe himself or at least to impress Hitler with the stringent need of replacing Goering. These were sent to Himmler because it was known that of the big-four he was the only one who would at least read such complaints; a thing that had long been impossible with the others, least of all with Hitler, as all such information was short-circuited long before it reached his desk."

18. HITLER ATTEMPTS TO REMEDY THE GOERING SITUATION: "Through Himmler's intervention Hitler finally called General Oberst von Greim to him in September 1944 and told him in secrecy of his misgivings regarding some of Goering's activities. Hitler then asked Greim to take control of all military air operations in such a manner that he would not have to remove Goering altogether. Greim agreed, but indicated that he could accept only if he were given complete freedom to fill responsible positions as he saw fit, and in addition that he should have such other rights and authority as would insure that the operational control could be exercised in the manner he deemed necessary. He was sent by the Fuehrer to Goering to arrange some sort of a division of duties."

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19. GOERING VS. GREIM: "In presenting his matter to Goering, Greim was met with a terrific harangue and out-burst of rage. Greim at once saw that any form of cooperation with Goering was impossible, reported this to Hitler, and asked to be sent back to his post as Commanding Officer of Luftflotte VI."

20. THE LAST DAYS: "Through his sickened egotism and selfishness Goering held to his position to the last, in spite of the fact that he himself was beginning to see that he was gradually slipping in his position, and because of this a people was practically destroyed and a terrible war continued long after it had been fully lost. Until just before the end he fought with the same determination to keep the trust of Hitler, a trust that he knew was fast waning. Then when he saw the end at hand, he deserted. A man who accepts every honor, every title, every decoration, and every position with constant avowals of his faithfulness, must be more than a scoundrel when he turns traitor the moment the Fuehrer had nothing more to give him."

21. GOERING'S "PLEASANT" PERSONALITY: "Many people have always been enamored by his strange personal charm, by his sense of humor, by his apparent appreciation of tradition and culture. This danger still exists. These same people have considered him as a picture of faithfulness to Hitler as well as the Fuehrer's greatest protector. These people may not understand his betrayal and his character and may still be of their former opinions. It is true that even the greatest criminal, the most dangerous human being, has his acceptable characteristics. The danger is that many people have seen only this 'display-side' and not the proper, odious side of Goering. No doubt his household servants, chauffeurs, and orderlies, who lived practically as well as he did himself, are still firmly convinced of his congeniality and goodness, as at first the whole nation was convinced. But such opinions should never be allowed to influence a proper judgment of the man. One must never forget the danger that such abnormal vanity, such gross incompetence, and pitiful inefficiency represents against the peoples of any nation and thereby against humanity."

22. ONLY SURVIVOR OF THE "BIG-FOUR": "In Goering's case the danger is particularly great, as he is the only survivor of the four leaders of the Third Reich. It is possible that the hopes of such people who are still sympathetically inclined to the Nazi regime and its ideology might hope that through Goering some aspects of the Nazi philosophy could be kept alive. Such a thing must never be allowed to occur. The people must know what sort of criminal Goering was, a criminal against Germany and against the world."

23. CONCLUSION: Reitsch draws two sharp conclusions out of her analysis of Goering that she feels condemn him in her eyes, in the eyes of the German people, and in the eyes of the world. The first is that through his ignorance he misused the Luftwaffe to such an extent that thousands of lives were lost, both through the improper defensive and offensive use of the weapon; The second is that through his vanity and warped ego he allowed himself to be informed falsely and in turn informed Hitler falsely as to the strength and capabilities of the air-arm. Reitsch believes that this false picture that Goering carried to the Fuehrer might easily have been drawn from Goering's actual impressions as it was simply forbidden to bring any pessimistic accounts to his attention. If this was the case Goering's guilt is all the greater, in Reitsch's opinion, because she believes that if Hitler had currently known the true status of his air weapon he would have been forced to recognize the inevitable defeat much earlier than he did. She therefore holds Goering responsible for the useless continuation of the war for many months after it was, in the eyes of almost everyone, completely and irretrievably lost.

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a. Every life lost on either side during that time, is in her opinion, to be unquestionably chalked up against Goering.

b. Reitsch draws a third conclusion in which she charges Hitler with the final and over-all responsibility of Goering's failures. Hitler's crime was that he did not possess the necessary insight to realize the incompetency of Goering and that even when he did begin to realize it in the last stages, Hitler was motivated by a false and criminal sense of allegiance to one of his old-guard, long-time supporters to the extent that he could not bring himself to remove Goering while there was still time.

c. In her opinion Hitler's removal of Goering during the early stages of the war would not have vindicated Goering but would substantially have shortened the duration of the war.

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